Cross sectional study of Character Strengths, Well-being and Positive Youth Development

A Synopsis

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Introduction

Character Strengths

Character strengths have the propensity similar to personality traits that show up in people's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. They are the subset of personality traits that are morally valued. Peterson and Seligman (2004) Character strengths are virtuously valued in every culture throughout history because they are necessary to contribute to well-being and protect against risk and a life of deviation (Dahlsgaard, Peterson & Seligman, 2005).

"Virtues are defined as the central characteristics that have been valued by moral philosophers and religious thinkers worldwide. Six central virtues were defined following extensive historical studies: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Virtues are considered as universal traits possibly grounded in biology through an evolutionary process that selects the best traits for solving the most important tasks at hand. Character strengths are the means that one may employ to exhibit a particular virtue. While each of these strengths requires the acquisition and use of knowledge, and are intimately (though not exclusively) connected with a particular virtue, they are distinct from one another. Generally, a virtuous individual would only exhibit one or two strengths from a particular virtue group. Twenty-four distinct strengths have been thus far identified. These strengths were derived from extensive cross-cultural and historical investigations, and repeated reductions of larger trait lists." (Peterson & Seligman 2004) The 24 strengths identified and classified under their respective Virtues are as follows:

VIA Classification of Strengths "Peterson and Seligman (2004) proposed a classification of 24 character strengths grouped under six overarching virtues claimed to be shared across culture and human history." (Dahlsgaard, Peterson, & Seligman,2005).

1. Wisdom (Cognitive Strengths) - Positive characteristics related to the gathering and application of knowledge in support of the good life are among the qualities of wisdom (Peterson and Seligman,2004)

- **Creativity**– "As an individual difference, creativity entails having ideas which are original as well as adaptive. Here being adaptive means the individual's originality must make a positive contribution to that person's life or to the lives of others." (Peterson and Seligman 2004)

- **Curiosity** - The inherent aspiration and inquisitiveness of an individual to look for adventure and apprehension of phenomenon. It can be manifested in simple day today activities that enrich person's daily life making it more satisfying (Peterson and Seligman 2004). Everyone experience and communicate inquisitiveness in their own way.

- **Open-Mindedness**- Open mindedness is the tendency to explore plans indifferent to oneself and to evaluate and accept them impartially. An individual will always accept plans, goals and beliefs contrary to one's view and accept them with inclusiveness (Peterson and Seligman, 2004).

- **Love of Learning**- Love of learning explains the context by which an individual in novel knowledge and expertise. "People possessing the strength love of learning experience positive feelings in the process of acquiring skills, satisfying curiosity, building on existing knowledge, and/or learning something completely new." (Krapp & Fink, 1992)

- **Perspective**- Perspective implies the capacity of taking one's own life into consideration. To let things become understandable to oneself. Perspective develops on the basis of data and exposure to the world, not only addition of data but extend to bring together this data to use it for the improvement of well-being. An individual who can develop vision will listen and assess they view and suggest (advice) as per requirement of the situation. (Peterson and Seligman, 2004).

2. **Courage (Emotional Strengths)-** Strength of courage signifies the capacity for achieving aims against the circumstances on the basis of will.

Bravery- Bravery doesn't mean being afraid because experiencing fear is inevitable rather; it is the ability to do the required act despite fear. It involves judging actual risk and ready to accept the consequences of action.

- **Persistence**– Persistence is moving toward the set goal in spite of obstacles, difficulties, or discouragement. Persistence has been reported to be associated with various factors such as expectation of positive outcome, perception of having high ability, internal locus of control, optimism & self esteem (Peterson, Maier, & Seligman, 1993; W. U. Meyer 1987; H. Weiss & Sherman, 1973).

- **Honesty** - People having integrity, authenticity, and honesty are true to themselves. They express themselves as they are—privately and publicly. They openly display their inner condition, objectives, commitment and accept consequences by taking responsibility for their feelings and behaviors. People with this strength value being true to self and others rather than being popular.

- **Vitality (Zest, enthusiasm, vigor)** –"Vitality describes a dynamic aspect of well-being marked by the subjective experience of energy and aliveness" (Ryan and Frederick, 1997). They are associated with psychological and physical factors. Physical level stress upon the association of being in a good health, free from tiredness and illness (Peterson and Seligman, 2004). "At the psychological level, vitality reflects experiences of volition, effectance, and integration of the self at both intrapersonal and interpersonal levels."

3. **Humanity (Interpersonal Strengths)** - Strengths of humanity include positive traits which are manifested in caring relationships with others.

- **Love** – Love originates within a reciprocal relationship with another person. It incorporates all categories of love viz. The love between partners of opposite sex, friends, parents and children, teacher-taught, team members and colleagues etc. Basic thing is having strong positive feelings toward others.

- **Kindness** – Kindness also termed as being generous, nurturing, caring, compassionate or altruism. Person with this strength have an inclination to help others without expectation of reciprocity, acclaim or any other type of benefit.

- **Social intelligence**- VIA authors endorsed this strength under the virtue of humanity instead of cognitive strengths. It involves understanding emotional relationships. Person having this strength display keen understanding of others emotions, know how to fit in social situations, know and make efforts to put others in comfort. Such persons are kind and generous and ever ready to help others.

4**. Justice (Civic Strengths)** - Strengths of justice can be categorized as interpersonal and effective functional relation between individual and the group or community..

- **Citizenship**– "Citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty, and teamwork represent a feeling of identification with and sense of obligation to a common good that includes the self but that stretches beyond one's own self-interest."Peterson & Seligman (2004). People with this strength consider themselves just a member of team and their priority is to work for a common goal of team.

- **Fairness**– "Fairness is the product of moral judgment—the process by which people determine what is morally right, what is morally wrong, and what is morally prescribed" (Peterson and Seligman 2004). Person possessing this strength believe everyone should get a fair share and using people for personal benefit is highly condemnable for them.

- **Leadership**- Leadership means a quality which entails a person to dominate, influence or manage and direct others in a way which leads to common success. In an ingrained sense leadership has a social aspect.

5. **Temperance (Strengths of restraint**) - The positive traits that protect people from excess are classified as strengths of temperance. Here temperance means to mellow down, or avoid over doing things not blocking them completely.

- **Forgiveness and Mercy**– "Forgiveness represents a suite of prosocial changes that occur within an individual who has been offended or damage by a relationship partner" (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000). Person having this strength value relationship as well instead of holding grudge they have positive feelings toward offender. They believe it is a way to have peace of their own mind.

- **Humility and Modesty**– Humility is a sign of strength and not as characterized 'being shy or meek'. It is an honest self evaluation and reflection of own strengths and weaknesses along with control over ego, arrogance and vanity. People with this strength have a real sense about their abilities and are ready to acknowledge their mistakes with openness to advice and new ideas. They are just the opposites of showoffs and shun boasting (Bryan 2017).

- **Prudence** - Prudence is being farsighted and regulating action in favour of long term positive outcome. It controls impulsive decision targeting short term goals in favour of fruitful long term goals. The person with this strength does overall and farsighted evaluation of situation and takes decision which is beneficial in the long term not only for self but for others concerned too.

- **Self regulation** - Self-regulation refers to having control over thoughts, emotions, impulses, performances, and other behaviors in order to pursue goals and live up to standards. Controlling impulsive action is especially important in self regulation.

6. **Transcendence (Theological Strengths) -** One of the pivotal aspects of transcendence is allowing a person to be in contact with universe and giving meaning to their lives.

- **Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence** - Person possessing this strength gets inner pleasure in noticing and appreciating excellence in others around which may be a person, phenomena, nature or universe at large. The VIA team presume that "People whose minds and hearts are open to beauty and excellence find more joy in daily life, more ways to find meaning in their own lives, and more ways to connect deeply with other people."

- **Gratitude** - Gratitude is a feeling of gratefulness and pleasantness in reciprocation of receiving a present. Be it in the context of physical form or the event happening in the movement initiated by nature. It is a way to acknowledge the effort made by other person which became a source of pleasure for receiver this type of gratitude may be referred to as personal gratitude. Peterson and Seligman 2004 stated the other type of gratitude too i.e. "Transpersonal gratitude which means gratefulness to God, to a higher power, or to the cosmos. As a trait, gratitude is expressed as an enduring thankfulness that is sustained across situations and over time."

- **Hope** - Hope, optimism, future-mindedness, and future orientation represent a cognitive, emotional, and motivational stance toward the future. Hopeful persons expect positive things to happen in future and work to achieve goals enthusiastically. Such persons don't lose hope on pretext of challenges have faith positive will outweigh negative in future too.

- **Humor** - Humor is strength as it adds cheer to self as well as others life. (Peterson & Seligman2004) considering it as a transcendence strength stated "Humor connects someone directly to troubles and contradictions in a way that produces not terror or anger but pleasure" They further explained humor involves playful recognition being cheerful in face of adversity and looking on its brighter side most importantly they have the capability of making others smile and laugh.

- **Spirituality** - Spirituality and religiousness refer to belief in a higher power and a conviction that there is a transcendent (nonphysical) dimension of life.

Peterson and Seligman (2004) acclaimed that spirituality is universal. All cultures have a concept of an ultimate, transcendent, sacred, and divine force, despite differences in the specific content of spiritual beliefs. Humans look to that power for support, guidance and strength. And it becomes their guiding force to avert them from doing what is considered wrong in their culture or society.

The VIA project proposed "Character strengths exists in degrees—i.e., along a continuum. Someone may be high on one strength yet low on another and average on yet a third." Furthermore person shouldn't be described as having lesser or more strengths. Character strengths are the pathway to attain the virtues valued within most of the cultures.

Well-being

Well-being in its definition contains the assessment of people's live according to their " optimal psychological functioning and experience" (Ryan & Deci 2001, p. 142). Life satisfaction is often explained as cognitive evaluation of the positivity of one's life as a whole (Diener, 1994). As per the philosophical traditions and research standpoint goes, there are two types well-being outlook.

First outlook is known as hedonic well-being which is concentrated in the experience of positive emotions and reduced amount of negative emotions. This view promotes high level of life satisfaction (Diener, 2000).

The other outlook is concentrated towards the eudaimonic view that includes three sub domains of well-being (a) personal growth, (b) authenticity and personal expressiveness, and (c) the pursuit of meaning in life (Ryff, 1995, Waterman, 1993). Hedonic well-being focuses primarily on subjective experiences of feeling good and eudaimonia imbibe living a long and meaningful life. Some researchers include intrinsic motivation in eudaimonic well-being, which create a vagueness while defining eudaimonic well-being concept (Ryan et. al, 2008).

Hedonic well-being is measured in individuals with the amount of pleasures and happiness in their life. In the words of a Greek philosopher Aristippus (435-356 BC), a good life is a life that is directed towards increasing the amount of pleasurable experiences and reducing displeasures in life (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Subjective well-being is taken as a measure to represent the levels hedonic well-being in individual's lives (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

The Duality of emotion, i.e. positive and negative experience of emotions considered to be the part of well-being and satisfaction of life contain the cognitive element of subjective well-being. Current researches indicate the close correlation of positive and negative emotions are linked to the constitution of experiencing certain sets of feelings and moods (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Increased levels of positive emotions are correlated with high energy, increased concentration, and pleasurable engagement, in contrast lower level of positive emotions are correlated with sadness and lethargy (Watson et al., 1988). Increased levels of the negative emotions are correlated with negative moods i.e. anger, guilt, and fear. Reduced levels of the negative emotions are correlated with calmness and serenity (Watson et. al , 1988).

Eudaimonic well-being view consists of a person's distinct ability and strengths helping an individual in order to create in reality (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff, 2014). Personal growth and self actualization are the core elements of eudaimonic well-being (Ryff & Singer, 2008). According to the view of eudaimonic well-being, hedonic well-being considered as deteriorated way of life, as short lived pleasure can cost much in the span of life (Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005b). The roots of eudaimonic well-being approach dates back to the time of Aristotle (Ryff, 1989).

Hedonic well-being in research is consider to be an indicator of the level of well-being whereas eudaimonic well-being shows individuals quality of life. By defining the two aspects of well-being it is to be noted that the researcher's revolves around the concept of the both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. Well-being may provide a fundamental structure for the growth of character strengths in an individual and five core domains of Positive youth development.

Positive Youth Development

The positive youth development is step in the positive direction of psychology, earlier psychologists mainly focused on the dysfunctional part of the human being. Even other sciences like sociology, education, public health and psychology is moving towards strengthening and developing youth in a more constructed way. Developmental researchers are currently using dynamic developmental systems to get a better understanding of plasticity of human development and its utility among individuals by using ecological settings as the bases of deviations in human development (Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 2006 ; Lerner, 2005 ; Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007).

Positive youth development is one of the outcomes that came out as a result of evaluation, interventions, community based and youth serving programs which have design to achieve the goal of positive youth development. The major focus of positive youth development is stressed upon the development of adolescent. The view of Positive Youth Development consider youth as valuable part which needs to be nurtured and pushed to grow instead of seeing youth as a problem. Positive youth development focuses on raising the competence, skill and ability in emerging population which is needed for them in order to grow and thrive in their life (Lerner et al., 2009).

The method that stems from this philosophy focuses on creating relationships that are mutually beneficial between young people among young people, in their families, communities, schools, working places, societies and cultural institutions for offering a way to develop knowledge, interest and abilities.

The Domains of positive youth development is divided into 5Cs which are as follows:-

Competence - Positive youth development view competence of an individual through their educational, interpersonal, cognitive and vocational progress. Interpersonal competence includes the efficiency of using intellectual prowess in resolving conflicts. Cognitive competence includes the efficient use of memory, reasoning and articulation in routine works. Educational competence include marks achieved, presence in class and midterm marks. Vocational competence include their career aptitude and working towards their goals to achieve the desired vocation.

Confidence - Positive youth development considers confidence as a holistic self worth and self esteem of a person. Confidence contains the global self and how an individual put global self in particular area of beliefs.

Connection - The ability to form a bond with people around one's surroundings such as within family, school, friends, and community where they mutually invest in the relationship.

Character - Character include high regards towards culture and social norms, having criteria for pro social behavior and moral code of conduct with integrity.

Caring and Compassion - A sense of sympathy and empathy for others.

Positive youth development approach works as a catalyst in developing skills, abilities and competence, promote positive relationships, building the surroundings and altering structure. Positive youth development engages individuals along with their families, communities, and/or governments to enable them to realize their full potential. In the United States and other high-income nations, it has been demonstrated that a PYD approach to programming has a positive effect on a variety of outcomes such as psychological well-being, educational growth, coitus and progeny, criminality and sectors such as health sector, educational sector, business sector and decrease in violent acts (Catalano, 2002; Gavin et al., 2010; Roth 2003).

Several governmental, theorists and policy makers are making attempts to recollect and gather affirmation about positive youth development across the world to lay out an all inclusive program to aid low to middle income countries.

Character strengths and positive youth development

Suitable style of parenting, academic support, with PYD programs and positive communities have shown to play dominant part in positive youth development, they are also beneficial in fostering character strengths. These components not only act as protection against various mental disorders but also work as a ingredient for thriving (Park, 2004).

Several studies have indicated that increase in character strengths is connected to reduce behavioral difficulties, stipulating that an increment in character strengths is by and large beneficial and must be promoted. Qin et. al., (2022) stated that behavioral difficulties are found to be in negative correlation with character strengths proving the immunity of character strengths in response to behavioral difficulties in emerging youth.

The specific case presented by Littman-Ovadia & Steger (2010b) stated that merely approving the characteristic as a personal strength was insufficiently associated to positive work and well-being. It is essential to make plan to establish these strengths in individual's work activities. This particular study presents an initiative to associate the identification and establishment of character strengths in individual's work related activities for their satiation and directing towards meaningful and virtuous life. This framework has provided data regarding the various paid and unpaid activities done by individuals, and how this information helps psychologists to test their hypotheses. To understand the view of people about themselves, how they perceive themselves in their work and their way to find well-being and meaning from their vocation. Future studies based on this model can help us better understand how putting our best selves forward in our work contribute to happiness and flourishing (Hadassah & Michael, 2010).

Wagner et. al., (2020) provided similar finding on European population regarding the association of all the strengths were correlated positively with PERMA model, and where there were differences and there were contrast connecting presence of well-being displayed for the PERMA model and character strengths and character strengths.

Well-being and Positive Youth Development

Kadir & Mohd, 2021 found the result of their study was in congruence with earlier studies which indicated that confidence and connection have directly or indirectly affected well-being by the means of purpose in life and hope. The association from results indicated 5Cs were significantly correlated with well-being.

Positive youth development has been found significantly positively correlated with well-being as a structure of mental health; these results are in alignment with the results of Ardal et al., (2017). These results were anticipated by Conway et al., (2015) in their study.

The results of the study indicated that competence and connection were come out to be essential variables of positive youth development which has an effect on well-being; despite the fact causal conclusions cannot be drawn. Results also suggested that appreciation of one's body was correlated with mental well-being within adolescents after 1 year of interval. Conclusion can be drawn from these findings indicate that the idea of youth's view about their body and encouraging experience tend to initiate their social networks and play an important role in present and future psychological health (Urke et al., 2021b).

The resembling structure and ways associating the dimensions of PERMA, character strengths and various measures of well-being and implementation in educational sphere can be helpful in studying PERMA theory's effect on youth. Positive education can be utilized as collective theoretical base and application structure for positive youth development, even in stressful situation between individual and their family's psychosocial environment where needs were more pressing (Leontopoulou, 2020).

Rationale of the Study

In today's time when we have youth which is prone to major distractions and abuse. A psychological model to give positive direction to youth has become of immense value. The

significance of Positive youth development is to create a constructional channel among youth and to help youth in becoming an active contributory unit in the community in the construction of future. Positive youth development approach acts a catalyst in building and strengthening the youth to thrive throughout their life. Youth is backbone of every generation growth, change and development. In the words of Seligman (2003) Positive psychology has been defined as the "study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals, communities, and organizations to thrive." It is also an applied approach to optimal functioning. The researcher wanted to take a step in this direction by following the direction of the previous researches. In order to achieve this idea, researcher has chosen two age group for cross sectional analysis among Character strengths, Well-being and Positive Youth Development to achieve the desired goal.

Objectives

1. To see the relationship between Character strengths, Well-being and Positive youth development.
2. To see gender difference on the basis of age group on the variables of Character strengths, Well-being and Positive youth development.
3. To examine the role of character strengths and Well-being on Positive youth development.

Hypotheses

1. There would be significant positive correlation between character strengths and positive youth development.
2. There would be positive correlation between well-being and positive youth development.
3. The boys and girls in both age groups would differ significantly on the measure of Character Strengths.
4. The boys and girls in both age groups would differ significantly on the measure of Well-being.

5. The boys and girls in both age groups would differ on the measure of Positive youth development.
6. Character strengths and well-being would be the significant predictor of positive youth development.

Design

Correlational Design

Variables

- **Independent variable**

  Character strengths, Well-being.

- **Dependent Variable**

  Positive youth development

- **Control Variable**

  Socio-economic status, age

Sample

The sample of 600 individuals will be chosen for the study out of which 300 would be males and 300 would be females within the age range of 14-18 adolescents (150 boys and 150 girls) and 24-28 adults (150 boys and 150 girls). Purposive sampling is used to collect data.

Sample (600)			
Adolescents (300)		**Adults (300)**	
Male (150)	**Female (150)**	**Male (150)**	**Female (150)**

Inclusion criteria

Only those subjects would be selected who can read and understand English.

- Age range of the adolescent would be from 14 to 18 years.
- Age range of the adults would be from 24 to 28 years.

Exclusion criteria

The subjects having any mental or physical illness would be excluded.

Tools

1. **The Values in Action Inventory of Strengths for Youth**

(a)VIA YOUTH-96 (Values In Action Youth-96) inventory of youth (Park & Peterson, 2006). It is used to measure character strengths. Its Hindi version, VIA YOUTH-96, has 96 items, four items in each subscale, and it was used to measure character strengths for 14 to 18-year-old age groups as per the requirement of this study.

(b)The Values in Action Inventory of Strengths for Youth is a self-report assessment of character strengths; it has 120 items and 24 scales, and the response format is a 5-point scale. The scales are: Creativity, Curiosity, Open-mindedness, Love of Learning, Perspective, Bravery, Perseverance, Honesty, Zest, Love, Kindness, Social Intelligence, Teamwork, Fairness, Leadership, Forgiveness, Modesty, Prudence. The response format is guided by high reliability and exhibited stability (Peterson, & Seligman, 2006). This self-report inventory measures 24 character strengths and its 6 virtues. Respondents answer all questions on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (From too few likes to too many likes, respectively).(For 24 to 28 age group)

2. **PERMA Profiler**

PERMA Profiler scale has been selected for the collection of data. The scale is made by Butler and Kern (2016). This scale has with 23 items with 11 point likert scale and made for population aging 10 years and above. PERMA is used for the assessment of: negative emotions, physical health, loneliness and happiness. PERMA has an additional 8 items scale which assess flourishing. The scale has high internal consistency, including Alpha coefficient between .72 to .90 and .94 for sub scales. . The internal structure of the PERMA Profiler scale has been studied through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, yielding

satisfactory fit indices (χ 2 (80) = 10.61; CF I = .97; T LI = .96 RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .03) for the five-factor model in adult population (Butler & Kern, 2016).

3. **Positive Youth Development Inventory-** The five Cs of PYD would be evaluated using the Short Measures of 5Cs developed by G. J. Geldhof et al. (2014), which contained 34 items divided into five dimensions measuring the five Cs of positive youth development: competence, character, connection, caring, and confidence. The Positive Youth Development questionnaire is designed to work with a 4-point response scale ranging from 1 as strongly disagree to 5 as strongly agree, and it can be given to youth aged 10 and older. Cronbach's Alphas for internal validity Overall for the entire VSPYD scale:.97. The alphas for each individual C are as follows: Competence -.80 to.86 Character -.80 to.92 Connection -.89 to 93 Caring.

Procedure

A purposive sampling is used to collect data. Participants are asked for their verbal consent before giving them questionnaires, initiative were taken as a rapport building during the collection to enhance quality responses from participants. Confidentiality is assured to the participants and scores of questionnaires were converted and interpreted as per respective manuals. Suitable analyses are used for study.

Statistical Analysis

Correlation is used to define the nature of relationship between Character strengths, well-being and positive youth development. Regression analysis is used for prediction of Character strengths and Well-being on Positive youth development. t-test is used for evaluating gender difference among variables and difference between two age groups formed for analysis. Partial correlation is used to see the effect of extraneous variable (Socio-economic status and age).

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